UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

City Making in The European City

2627-2-F8804N018

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding
The course offers the analytical, methodological and conceptual tools to identify and be able to analyse the transformations affecting the contemporary European city, with a special focus on the role of civil society in the city-making process, i.e. in directing, influencing and addressing change.
Applied knowledge and understanding
It is aimed at students with a particular interest in urban development practices and how these relate to broader political and economic processes.
Autonomy of judgement
The objective of the course is to develop a critical approach in the analysis of major urban transformations through an articulated framework capable of identifying the actors involved, narratives, interests, and opportunities at stake.
Communication skills and ability to learn
Students are expected to present case studies and scientific articles that will develop their communication skills and their ability to learn

Contents

The debate and the main characteristics of the European city (its history and traditions, institutional arrangements, multilevel governance, ...) represent the introductory part of the course, useful to outline the context within which the first part, which deals with particularly urgent and relevant urban issues in the contemporary European city, is developed. In the second part of the course the role of civil society in city-making processes will be discussed.

Detailed program

The course first addresses the debate that, at the turn of the 1990s and 21st century, characterised urban studies in Europe in which, on the one hand, the emergence of European cities as a new player in the global political-economic arena was observed, and on the other hand, the persistence of certain characteristics that were traditionally associated with these contexts: social cohesion, high quality of life, economic competitiveness, less pronounced urban segregation, the role of civil society in transformation processes, and so on.
The theoretical framework on the European city allows us to focus on the combination of elements linked to the historical and cultural context, the local and multi-level institutional framework, and the constellation of public and private actors that make it up. The focus on the European city does not imply a Eurocentric point of view, but, on the contrary, highlights the need for a situated, post-colonial approach capable of understanding the processes at work in the most diverse contexts.
From this perspective, a number of issues are explored, which help to focus on the main transformations taking place and the role of civil society in change, with a particular focus on bottom-up practices related to art, culture and care.
Introduction
• the European city as a context
• Who governs the European city? Which institutions, at which levels, which actors, which interests?
• Right to the city, citymaking and the civil society
Part One: Urban Issues
• Cities in the global economy and financialisation
• Urban regeneration and the housing issue
• Social and residential segregation
• Urban Poverty
• Gentrification
• The economy linked to culture and creativity
Part two: citymaking
• Citizen participation
• Citymaking: buzzword or useful concept?
• Art, culture and care in citymaking practices
• Practices of resistance and re-appropriation of the city
• Methodological focus: how to investigate into citymaking?

Prerequisites

None

Teaching methods

Traditional class lectures, seminars with experts, practitioners and policy maker; class discussion and students' presentations. If possible, visit outside the university campus will be organised.
As a general indication, teaching will be organised as follows:

- Approximately 60% of the hours will be dedicated to didactic delivery with frontal lessons using slides and audio-video-textual material.
- Approximately 40% of the hours will be devoted to interactive teaching, which will include, in addition to field trips, individual and group work by students, presentation of texts and discussion of case studies.

Assessment methods

The evaluation is diversified into two paths of choice:
a) Pathway with exercises and group work. Students who choose this pathway are assessed on the basis of the following elements: 1) Group work: presentation and classroom discussion of a scientific article and report (written and oral) on a case study; 2) individual oral interview aimed at assessing learning and understanding of the course topics.
b) Course without exercises and group work. Oral examination to assess learning and understanding of teaching materials and reference texts
In general, for all students, the assessment takes into account knowledge of the course topics and the relevant bibliography, language property and critical-interpretative ability.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Depending on the path, the materials are:
a) Course with presentations and group work: In addition to the knowledge acquired through active presence during the lectures and the lecturer's explanations, we recommend reading the following articles.

- Annunziata, S., L. Lees, and C. Rivas Alonso (2021) «Segregation, Social Mix, and Gentrification" in A. M. Orum, J. Ruiz-Tagle, and S. Vicari Haddock (eds) Companion to Urban and Regional Studies
- Brenner, N., Marcuse, P., & Mayer, M. (2009). Cities for people, not for profit. City, 13(2–3), 176–184. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810903020548
- d'Ovidio, M. (2021). Ethics at work: Diverse economies and place-making in the historical centre of Taranto, Italy, 58(11), 2276–2292. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098021992221
- Gabauer, A., Knierbein, S., Cohen, N., Lebuhn, H. (2025) "Care, Uncare, And The City" in Gabauer, A., Knierbein, S., Cohen, N., Lebuhn, H., Trogal, K. and Viderman, T. Care and the city. Encounters with Urban Studies. Routledge https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003031536-1
- Kazepov et al. "European Cities between continuity and change" in Orum, A. M., Ruiz-Tagle, J., & Haddock, S. V. (2021). Companion to Urban and Regional Studies. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119316916
- Ross, J. I., Lennon, J. F., & Kramer, R. (2020). Moving beyond Banksy and Fairey: Interrogating the co-optation and commodification of modern graffiti and street art. Visual Inquiry, 9(1), 5–23. https://doi.org/10.1386/vi_00007_2

  Any other in-depth texts will be indicated on the e-learning page

  b) Course without exercises and group work:

  Reference texts:
- Alberta Andreotti, 2019, Governare Milano nel nuovo millennio, Il Mulino, Bologna.
- Stavros Stavrides (2022) Spazio comune. Città come commoning. Agenzia X, Milano.

  Papers (available on the library website)
- Brenner, N., Marcuse, P., & Mayer, M. (2009). Cities for people, not for profit. City, 13(2–3), 176–184. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810903020548
- d'Ovidio, M. (2021). Ethics at work: Diverse economies and place-making in the historical centre of Taranto, Italy, 58(11), 2276–2292. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098021992221
- Gabauer, A., Knierbein, S., Cohen, N., Lebuhn, H. (2025) "Care, Uncare, And The City" in Gabauer, A., Knierbein, S., Cohen, N., Lebuhn, H., Trogal, K. and Viderman, T. Care and the city. Encounters with Urban Studies. Routledge https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003031536-1
- Grodach, C. (2017). Urban cultural policy and creative city making. Cities, 68, 82–91. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CITIES.2017.05.015
- Pradel-Miquel, M. (2017). Kiezkulturnetz vs. Kreativquartier: Social innovation and economic development in two neighbourhoods of Berlin. City, Culture and Society, 8, 13–19. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CCS.2016.05.001

Sustainable Development Goals

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES